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**Class Counsel and  
Attorneys for Plaintiff Aristedes Francisco**

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

ARISTEDES FRANCISCO, as an individual and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

v.  
Plaintiff,

EMERITUS CORPORATION, an unknown corporation; BROOKDALE SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES, INC., an unknown corporation, and DOES 1 through 50, inclusive.

## Defendants.

Case No.: CV 17-02871 VAP (SSx)  
[Hon. Virginia A. Phillips, Courtroom  
8A]

## **PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT**

Date: September 23, 2019  
Time: 2:00 p.m.  
Place: Courtroom 8A

Date Filed: March 16, 2017

1 **TO ALL PARTIES AND THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNSEL OF RECORD:**

2 PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on September 23, 2019, at 2:00 p.m., or as  
3 soon thereafter as this matter may be heard in Courtroom 8A of the above-captioned  
4 Court, located at 350 West 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, Plaintiff Aristedes  
5 Francisco (“Plaintiff”) will, and hereby does, bring an unopposed motion for an  
6 order: (1) granting final approval of the class action settlement reached by the  
7 Parties in this action, (2) fully and finally approving and directing distribution to the  
8 Class of the net settlement amount pursuant to the terms of the settlement, (3) fully  
9 and finally approving the Enhancement Payment to Plaintiff in the amount of  
10 \$10,000.00, (4) fully and finally approving the award of attorneys’ fees in the  
11 amount of \$83,333.33, (5) fully and finally approving an award of costs in the  
12 amount of \$15,000.00, and (6) fully and finally approving the Settlement  
13 Administration Costs in the amount of \$21,552.00.

14 This motion will be based on this notice, the supporting memorandum of  
15 points and authorities, the declarations filed concurrently herewith, all pleadings and  
16 papers currently in the Court’s file and such other oral and documentary evidence as  
17 may be presented at the hearing on this motion.

18  
19 DATED: July 1, 2019

**YOON LAW, APC**  
**HEKMAT LAW GROUP**

20  
21 By: /s/ Kenneth H. Yoon

22 Kenneth H. Yoon  
23 Stephanie E. Yasuda  
24 Joseph M. Hekmat  
Class Counsel and Attorneys for Plaintiff  
Aristedes Francisco

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1                   **MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES**

2                   **I. INTRODUCTION**

3                   By this Motion, Plaintiff Aristedes Francisco (“Plaintiff” or “Class  
4 Representative”) seeks the Court’s final approval of the Joint Stipulation of  
5 Settlement and Release (“Settlement”) between Plaintiff and Defendants Emeritus  
6 Corporation and Brookdale Senior Living Communities, Inc. (“Defendants”). The  
7 Settlement provides for \$250,000 as the Maximum Settlement Amount with no  
8 reversion to the Defendants. The Net Settlement Amount is the balance of the Gross  
9 Settlement Amount after the following are deducted: (1) attorneys’ fees in an amount  
10 up to \$83,333.25 (33 1/3% of the Gross Settlement Amount); (2) actual litigation  
11 costs advanced by Class Counsel not to exceed \$15,000; (3) Settlement  
12 Administration Costs up to \$22,000.00; and (4) \$10,00.000 for the Enhancement  
13 Payment to Plaintiff. The Class consists of all current and former non-exempt  
14 employees of Defendants who worked for Emeritus Corporation in California at any  
15 time from May 11, 2013 to the present, excluding those who transitioned to any  
16 Brookdale entity (Brookdale acquired Emeritus in 2014). The Class totals 2,292  
17 persons. The Class Period is the period from May 11, 2013 through July 31, 2014.

18                   Pursuant to the Court’s order of April 30, 2019 granting preliminary approval,  
19 the Settlement Administrator, ILYM Group, Inc., has complied with this Court’s  
20 requirements for notice to the Class by mailing notice to 2,292 Class Members  
21 contained in the class list. The results of the notice process are as follows:

22                   1. Four (4) exclusion requests;  
23                   2. Zero (0) objections;  
24                   3. Ninety-Eight (98) undelivered notices.

25                   Thus, virtually every Class Member (99.83%) will be sent a settlement  
26 payment. (Declaration of Stephanie Molina (“Molina Decl.”) (DE 92) ¶¶ 7-13.)

27                   Plaintiff and Class Counsel respectfully request that the Court grant final  
28 approval of the Settlement, including payments from the gross settlement amount for

1 the Class Representative's Enhancement Payment of \$10,000.00, attorneys' fees in  
2 the amount of \$83,333.33, costs in the amount of \$15,000.00, and settlement  
3 administration costs to ILYM Group, Inc. in the amount of \$21,552.00, which is less  
4 than the \$22,000.00 amount contained in the class notice. (Molina Decl. Ex. A, p. 4.)

5 **II. NOTICE TO THE CLASS**

6 Pursuant to the Court's Procedural Order granting preliminary approval of the  
7 class action settlement (DE 90), the Settlement Administrator gave notice via USPS  
8 First-Class Mail to the 2,292 Class Members contained in the class list on May 24,  
9 2019. (Molina Decl. ¶ 7.) As part of the preparation for mailing, the Settlement  
10 Administrator processed all 2,292 names and addresses contained in the Class List  
11 against the National Change of Address ("NCOA") database maintained by the  
12 United States Postal Service, for purposes of updating and confirming the mailing  
13 addresses. (Molina Decl. ¶ 6.)

14 352 Notice Packets were returned to the Settlement Administrator as  
15 undeliverable, none bearing a forwarding address. The Settlement Administrator  
16 performed a computerized skip trace on all 352 returned Notice Packets in an effort  
17 to obtain an updated address for purposes of re-mailing the Notice Packet. As a result  
18 of this skip trace, the Settlement Administrator obtained 254 updated addresses and  
19 promptly re-mailed the Notice Packet to those Class Members via U.S. First Class  
20 Mail. (Molina Decl. ¶ 8.)

21 As of the date of this motion, a total of 254 Notice Packets have been re-  
22 mailed, and a total of 98 Notice Packets (4.3%) have been deemed undeliverable, as  
23 no updated address was found notwithstanding Settlement Administrator's skip  
24 tracing efforts. (Molina Decl. ¶ 10.) There were four requests for exclusion and no  
25 objections. (Molina Decl. ¶¶ 11, 12.)

26 The Settlement Administrator has been and will continue to perform the  
27 required duties to ensure the best practicable notice, as set forth in the Settlement and  
28 the Court's order.

1           **III. EVALUATION OF THE SETTLEMENT**

2           To determine the preliminary fairness of an agreement, the Court balances the  
3 strength of plaintiffs' case; the risk, expense, complexity, and likely duration of  
4 further litigation; the risk of maintaining class action status throughout the trial; the  
5 amount offered in settlement; the extent of discovery completed, and the stage of the  
6 proceedings; the experience and views of counsel; the presence of a governmental  
7 participant; and the reaction of the class members to the proposed settlement." *Linney*  
8 *v. Cellular Alaska P'ship*, 151 F.3d 1234, 1242 (9th Cir. 1998).

9           The Court's Procedural Order (DE 90) addressed the *Linney* factors and  
10 concluded that the Settlement was fair, reasonable, and adequate. As set forth in  
11 Plaintiff's motion for preliminary approval (DE 88) and the declaration of the  
12 Settlement Administrator (DE 92), Plaintiff has provided the Court with the "basic  
13 information about the nature and magnitude of the claims in question and the basis  
14 for concluding that the consideration being paid for the release of those claims  
15 represents a reasonable compromise." *Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.*, 168 Cal.  
16 App. 4th 116, 133 (2008). This includes the gross settlement amount, the average net  
17 recovery to each Class Member, and an estimate of actual damages.

18           To briefly reiterate the points made in Plaintiff's motion for preliminary  
19 approval, the Settlement in the amount of \$250,000.00 represents a fair, reasonable,  
20 and adequate result in this action. The parties actively litigated this case since the  
21 commencement of the lawsuit in March 2017. Counsel for the parties used the pre-  
22 mediation time period to investigate the veracity, strength, and scope of the class  
23 claims, and also to prepare the matter for class certification. The parties conducted  
24 formal and informal investigations and discovery into the facts of the case (including  
25 motion practice as needed), which included, and were not limited to: obtaining  
26 contact information for putative class members; contacting and interviewing Plaintiff  
27 and other putative class members; conducting depositions; propounding written  
28 discovery requests; and reviewing and analyzing voluminous documents and data

1 produced by Defendants, including with the assistance of an expert. These documents  
2 and data included, and were not limited to, employment records for Plaintiff and  
3 other putative class members, a large sampling of payroll data for putative class  
4 members, and Defendants' operations and employment policies, practices, and  
5 procedures. Class Counsel have extensive experience in employment class action  
6 law, including significant experience in wage-and-hour class action litigation. Class  
7 counsel have been appointed class counsel in numerous employment class action  
8 cases, and have recovered millions of dollars for individuals in California. Both  
9 Parties' counsel were capable of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the Class  
10 Members' claims against Defendants and the benefits of the Settlement under the  
11 circumstances of the case and in the context of a private, consensual settlement  
12 agreement. Further, the Settlement takes into account the potential risks and rewards  
13 inherent in any case and, in particular, with this case. This action has not proceeded  
14 through class certification, and both Parties faced the risk of the Court's certification  
15 decision. Following class certification, preparation for trial would have been  
16 expensive for all parties, and trial outcomes are inherently uncertain.

17 In addition to this information Plaintiff supplied in support of his motion for  
18 preliminary approval, Plaintiff notes Class Members' reaction to the Settlement has  
19 been overwhelmingly positive, as detailed in the declaration of the Settlement  
20 Administrator filed on July 22, 2019 (DE 92). Specifically, of a Class of 2,292  
21 persons, there have been zero objections and four opt-outs, for a total participation  
22 rate of 99.83%. (Molina Decl. (DE 92) ¶¶ 7-13.) Thus, 2,288 Qualified Claimants  
23 will share in the net amount of \$120,114.67. Along with the other *Linney* factors  
24 previously considered by the Court, this factor also weighs in favor of final approval.

25 **IV. THE REQUESTED ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS ARE  
26 REASONABLE**

27 As detailed in Plaintiff's motion for attorneys' fees and costs filed on July 1,  
28 2019 (DE 91), Plaintiff is requesting attorneys' fees in the amount of \$83,333.33,  
which represents a thirty-three and one-third percent of the Gross Settlement Amount

1 of \$250,000.00. Plaintiff is also requesting an award of litigation costs in amount of  
2 \$15,000.00, which is less than the actual costs of \$15,176.14. Defendants do not  
3 oppose these requests, and there have been no objections from the Class to these  
4 amounts.

5 In a diversity action such as this, federal courts apply state law both to  
6 determine the right to fees and the method for calculating them. *Vizcaino v. Microsoft*  
7 *Corp.*, 290 F.3d 1043, 1047 (9th Cir. 2002). The Ninth Circuit has held that it will  
8 “follow other circuits that apply state law in calculating the fee.” *Mangold v. Cal.*  
9 *Public Utils. Comm’n*, 67 F.3d 1470, 1478 (9th Cir. 1995). California law, in turn,  
10 embraces the percentage method, which “calculates the fee as a percentage share of a  
11 recovered common fund or the monetary value of the plaintiffs’ recovery.” *Laffitte v.*  
12 *Robert Half Int’l Inc.*, 1 Cal. 5th 480, 490 (2016). Under the percentage method, “fee  
13 awards in class actions average around one-third of the recovery.” *Chavez v. Netflix,*  
14 *Inc.*, 162 Cal. App. 4th 43, 66, n.11 (2008).

15 Thus, Plaintiff’s request for fees in the amount of one-third of the common  
16 fund is appropriate. Moreover, as detailed in Plaintiff’s fee motion (DE 91), Class  
17 counsel’s total lodestar is \$468,653.42, based on 712.6 attorney hours, and thus the  
18 requested fees are less than a fifth of class counsel’s total lodestar. Thus, the lodestar  
19 cross-check provides support for Plaintiff’s request. See *Vizcaino*, 290 F.3d at 1050  
20 (“Calculation of the lodestar, which measures the lawyers’ investment of time in the  
21 litigation, provides a check on the reasonableness of the percentage award”). The  
22 reasonableness of the requested fee award is confirmed by the lodestar cross-check.

23 Further, Class Counsel took a significant risk in pursuing this case, and  
24 obtained an excellent result. Brookdale acquired Emeritus in 2014, and at the time  
25 disseminated an arbitration agreement to its employees. Thus, the Class consists only  
26 of those persons who worked for Emeritus and did not subsequently execute  
27 arbitration agreements, *i.e.*, the Class is comprised of former employees of Defendant  
28 Emeritus whose employment terminated over five years ago. The likelihood of

1 success at class certification – which is so often dependent upon class members’  
2 willingness to participate in the action and execute declarations – is low because  
3 Class Members are less likely to (1) recall events that happened over five years ago,  
4 and (2) have a desire to involve themselves in an action that challenges employment  
5 practices of a former employer that occurred many years ago. Further, at the time of  
6 filing of this action, the time period for which Plaintiff and counsel could assert a  
7 claim was a narrow one-year period, as the statute of limitations had run on any  
8 claims Plaintiff may have had under California’s Labor Code. Thus, this action is  
9 premised solely upon the alleged violation of California’s Unfair Competition Law  
10 (“UCL”). Nevertheless, the Settlement represents almost 30% of the estimated actual  
11 loss.

12 Based on the foregoing and on Plaintiff’s fee motion (DE 91), Plaintiff  
13 respectfully requests the Court finally approve attorneys’ fees in the amount of  
14 \$83,333.33.

15 **V. THE REQUESTED ENHANCEMENT PAYMENT IS REASONABLE**

16 As detailed in Plaintiff’s motion for attorneys’ fees and costs filed on July 1,  
17 2019 (DE 91), as well as Plaintiff’s declaration (DE 91-4), Plaintiff has made  
18 significant sacrifices to pursue this lawsuit. Most notably, Plaintiff has lived alone in  
19 Los Angeles and deferred returning to his family in the Philippines so that he could  
20 be available during the pendency of this action. He has not seen his wife and three  
21 boys since approximately December 2017. This is a unique hardship that a typical  
22 class representative would not ordinarily face, and one that Plaintiff took upon  
23 himself for the benefit of this Class.

24 Accordingly, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court approve an  
25 Enhancement Payment in the amount of \$10,000.00 for his work done on behalf of  
26 the Class.  
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1 **VI. SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATOR'S COSTS SHOULD BE  
2 APPROVED**

3 The Settlement Administrator initially estimated \$22,000.00 for administration  
4 costs, which is the amount disclosed in the Class Notice. However, the final costs are  
5 less than the not-to-exceed amount, at \$21,552.00. According to the Settlement,  
6 Settlement Administration Costs shall be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount.

7 The Settlement Administrator has complied with the terms of the Settlement  
8 and the Court's Procedural Order. For these reasons, Plaintiff respectfully submits the  
9 Court should approve the Settlement Administration Costs in the amount of  
10 \$21,552.00.

11 **VII. CONCLUSION**

12 Based on the foregoing argument and authority, Plaintiff respectfully submits  
13 that the standards for final approval of the Settlement have been met, and the terms of  
14 the Settlement are fair, adequate and reasonable.

15 DATED: July 1, 2019

16 **YOON LAW, APC  
HEKMAT LAW GROUP**

17 By: /s/ Kenneth H. Yoon

18 Kenneth H. Yoon  
19 Stephanie E. Yasuda  
20 Joseph M. Hekmat  
21 *Class Counsel and Attorneys for Plaintiff*  
22 *Aristedes Francisco*